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**Report of the Trade and Development Commission
on its ninth session**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 27 November to 1 December 2017

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Introduction

The ninth session of the Trade and Development Commission was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 27 November to 1 December 2017, the first under the current cycle of work.

I. Action by the Trade and Development Commission

A. From decisions to actions: Trade as a catalyst for accomplishing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Agreed conclusions

The Trade and Development Commission,

Reaffirming that international trade can be an engine for inclusive growth and poverty reduction and that it can contribute to the promotion of sustainable development,

Noting with concern that international trade growth remains weak and that sluggish international trade and weak economic growth are likely to affect progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,

1. *Reiterates* the important role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as the focal point within the United Nations system for the integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development and in contributing to supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the Nairobi Maafikiano,* adopted at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Nairobi;

2. *Stresses* the importance of UNCTAD in supporting Sustainable Development Goal 17, the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through activities that contribute towards the promotion of trade and sustainable development, with particular emphasis on increasing exports of developing countries and the least developed countries;

3. *Notes* that expert meetings, consistent with the Nairobi Maafikiano and the terms of reference approved by the Trade and Development Board, continue to facilitate constructive sharing of experiences and best practices, and networking among experts, with a view to enhancing substantive knowledge;

4. *Underlines* the importance of promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars of UNCTAD work;

5. *Notes* the importance of maritime transport for world trade;

6. *Notes with appreciation* the convening in 2017 of a first international forum for national trade facilitation committees, hosted by UNCTAD and organized in collaboration with many international organizations;

7. *Commends* the launch of a new sustainable freight transport toolkit, aimed at building the capacity of developing countries to enable a reorientation towards sustainable freight transport, and the provision of advisory services on international transport and trade facilitation, as well as the *Review of Maritime Transport* and related statistical and information services;

8. *Recognizes* that achieving greater transparency in trade regulations also facilitates trade and that it can help to grow trade, create jobs and increase incomes;

* TD/519/Add.2.

9. *Requests* UNCTAD to continue providing support as needed to requesting countries in the formulation and review of national trade and sustainable development policies, in the context of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Nairobi Maafakiano;

10. *Recognizes* the value of UNCTAD support to the national efforts of member States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in key areas, such as in the nexus between trade, development and environment, trade and climate change and renewable and low emission energy sources, and calls upon the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its work on relevant Sustainable Development Goals, including through its technical cooperation programme;

11. *Encourages* the UNCTAD secretariat to further disseminate the outcomes of its research, including from technical assistance, capacity-building and consensus-building, at the national and regional levels;

12. *Expresses satisfaction* with the presentation of the UNCTAD secretariat on the most recent trends and policies in the areas of trade, trade logistics and sustainable development, and calls on the secretariat to continue conducting independent research and analysis in these areas and making policy recommendations, focusing on developing countries;

13. *Acknowledges* the important work of UNCTAD on trade trends and non-tariff measures, and requests the secretariat's assistance to developing countries and economies in transition in enhancing their capacity to address the trade and development impact of non-tariff measures;

14. *Recognizes* the importance of including environmental and social protection and economic development goals within national trade and infrastructure policies, drawing on the contributions of all stakeholders, in particular Governments and the private sector;

15. *Recognizes* the importance of incorporating a gender perspective in the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and the key role that gender-responsive trade policies can play in realizing the social and economic targets embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requests the UNCTAD secretariat to continue its efforts to mainstream gender into its work;

16. *Welcomes* the iterations of the online UNCTAD course on trade and gender, which have benefited more than 400 stakeholders from more than 100 countries;

17. *Welcomes* the first voluntary peer review of UNCTAD on consumer protection law and policy as a tool for policy reform and a catalyst for international cooperation and technical cooperation, and encourages interested member States to continue to volunteer in accordance with available resources;

18. *Requests* UNCTAD to continue its assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition on formulating and implementing competition and consumer protection policies and laws and sharing of best practices, as well as facilitating international cooperation among competition and consumer protection agencies together with other relevant international organizations, taking into account the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection and the United Nations Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices;**

19. *Requests* UNCTAD to continue and reinforce its work on trade in services, services data and statistics and analysis of trade and services for development;

20. *Requests* UNCTAD to continue to provide and reinforce its technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries and countries with economies in transition before, during and in the follow-up of the process of accession to the World Trade Organization;

** General Assembly resolution 70/186 and General Assembly resolution 35/63, respectively.

21. *Requests* UNCTAD to continue to support regional integration schemes, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, and to continue to assist the least developed countries in making use of existing initiatives and programmes, such as duty-free and quota-free schemes, preferential rules of origin for those countries and the least developed countries services waiver, as well as targeted assistance under initiatives such as the Enhanced Integrated Framework and Aid for Trade;

22. *Requests* UNCTAD to continue its work through its three pillars in the fields of international transport and transit, trade logistics, trade facilitation and related issues;

23. *Looks forward* to the 2018 edition of the *Review of Maritime Transport*, and requests that the findings of the report and related statistical and information products be incorporated into the capacity-building work of UNCTAD and fed into intergovernmental deliberations, as well as other relevant policymaking forums;

24. *Acknowledges* various UNCTAD programmes, including the Automated System for Customs Data, port management and trade facilitation programmes, as well as the empowerment programme for national trade facilitation committees and technical assistance and advisory services towards sustainable and resilient freight transport, and commends these programmes for their successful implementation;

25. *Expresses appreciation* for the financial support provided by donors to these programmes.

*Closing plenary meeting
1 December 2017*

B. Other action taken by the Commission

Reports of expert meetings

(Agenda item 3)

(a) Reports of the multi-year and single-year expert meetings:

Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation

1. The Chair of the fifth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation presented the report.

2. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/15.

Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development

3. The Chair of the ninth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development presented the report.

4. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.2/39.

Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development

5. On behalf of the Chair of the fifth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

6. The Trade and Development Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.4/15.

Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation

7. On behalf of the Chair of the first session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

8. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.8/3.

Expert Meeting on the Ways and Means of Improving the Implementation of Priority Areas Agreed in the Istanbul Programme of Action

9. The Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur of the single-year expert meeting presented the report, on behalf of the Chair.

10. One delegate endorsed the report and highlighted the importance of the outcomes of the meeting for least developed countries. He emphasized the need for least developed countries to receive support for their efforts to increase productive capacity, diversify their economy, harness the opportunities offered by South–South Cooperation and mobilize financial resources, underscoring in particular the importance of overseas development assistance and the Aid for Trade programme. Since the introduction of the category of least developed countries, only five countries had graduated to developing country status, underscoring the need for least developed countries to speed up efforts towards attaining the graduation target for 2011–2020 established during the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. He requested that delegates endorse the report of the meeting.

11. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/EM.9/3.

(b) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy

12. On behalf of the Chair of the sixteenth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

13. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/CLP/47, and endorsed the agreed conclusions as contained therein.

(c) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy

14. On behalf of the Chair of the second session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, the UNCTAD secretariat presented the report.

15. The Commission took note of the report, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/CPLP/9, and endorsed the agreed conclusions as contained therein.

II. Chair's summary

A. Opening plenary meeting

16. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD made the opening remarks at the ninth session of the Trade and Development Commission. The following delegations made opening statements: the representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of the Sudan, on behalf of the African Group; the representative of Brazil, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; and the representative of China; the representative of Morocco; and the representative of Nepal.

17. The Deputy Secretary-General noted that the session provided a forum to examine the links between key priorities of the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, the UNCTAD work programme and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She noted that recent geopolitical trends had contributed to the challenges facing multilateral trade cooperation. Revitalizing the multilateral trading system remained a cornerstone to achieving the objectives of economic growth and sustainable development through trade.

18. The representatives of several regional groups and delegations reaffirmed the importance of trade in achieving sustainable and inclusive development. One delegate expressed concern about the recent rise in protectionist and inward-looking approaches to trade, which posed challenges for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

19. The representatives of some regional groups expressed concern about weak performance in international trade and the projection of a slow growth rate. One regional group voiced concern regarding Africa's small share of international trade, which had eroded to 2.2 per cent. Further investment was needed in development of supply capacity, particularly in manufactured goods and services.

20. The representatives of some regional groups and delegations stressed that, with the entry into force of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization, its full implementation was the focus, which could contribute to boosting trade and economic development and making progress on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation of trade facilitation reforms was challenging and required significant efforts and a long-term view of several areas, particularly for developing and least developed countries. They called for long-term technical assistance and capacity-building support programmes to enable developing countries and least developed countries to implement reforms consistently and sustainably. To benefit from implementation of trade facilitation reforms required ensuring that relevant investment in infrastructure was also in place. One delegate noted that entry into force of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation allowed developing countries and least developed countries to establish a timetable, based on their own capacity, for its implementation.

21. The representatives of several regional groups and delegations recognized the key role of UNCTAD in providing technical assistance to developing countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They welcomed continued UNCTAD efforts in trade logistics, sustainable transport, service policy reviews, competition law, consumer protection and non-tariff measures, commended work on negotiations on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and noted UNCTAD technical assistance and capacity-building programmes in trade facilitation, including support towards the establishment of national trade facilitation committees, implementation of the Automated System for Customs Data programme, and technical assistance and advisory services on sustainable freight transport. They called on UNCTAD to continue work in those areas and assist developing countries to fully harness trade as an engine for development.

22. One regional group reiterated appreciation of support for UNCTAD work on transport and trade logistics across its three pillars, including forward-looking effort on sustainable freight transport systems and trade facilitation. Another regional group commended the work of UNCTAD in providing technical assistance on coastal transport infrastructure and updated research and analysis on trends in international trade, as well as work on the impact of non-tariff measures on the trade and development prospects of developing countries. Some regional groups also noted technical assistance towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in trade facilitation and international transport, including the *Review of Maritime Transport 2017*.

B. From decisions to actions: Trade as a catalyst for accomplishing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

(Agenda item 4)

Issues pertaining to the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

23. The Officer-in-Charge of the UNCTAD Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities provided an overview of the evolution of merchandise and services exports over the last four years, highlighting the resilience of trade in services despite a slowdown in trade in goods. It was widely acknowledged that trade growth played an important role in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 17.

24. Panellists discussed fishery subsidies, trade and gender and non-tariff measures as areas with potential for specific outcomes at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization.

25. On negotiations on fishery subsidies, some panellists noted that the current negotiations phase was the most intensive since the launch of the Doha Round in 2001. For the first time, a wide range of members were engaged in text-based negotiations, and ministers would be effectively considering substantial commitments. There was still uncertainty on the political will of large fishing nations, though expectations remained high.

26. Target 14.6 under the Sustainable Development Goals should be achieved by 2020. Developed countries were responsible for 65 per cent of all fishery subsidies and developing countries, for 35 per cent.

27. While reaching an outcome to prohibit subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and on transparency was a possibility, some panellists also pointed to the need to address more comprehensively subsidies that contributed to overfishing and overcapacity, as well as special and differential treatment.

28. UNCTAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme had been at the forefront of consensus-building on phasing out fishery subsidies at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference. Their joint statement on regulating fish subsidies, at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 in 2017, underscoring that decisive action was needed to prohibit certain forms of fisheries, including by accelerating World Trade Organization negotiations, had created momentum.

29. Several delegations thanked the strong support shown by the agencies in providing policy advice and space for informed dialogue.

30. On trade and gender, some panellists emphasized that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognized trade as a means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and established more explicit links between gender equality, women's empowerment and trade. Encouraging the participation of women in trade was crucial to achieve gender equality and foster economic growth. Awareness of the links between trade and gender was rising, as recent free trade area agreements included trade and gender chapters.

31. At the Eleventh Ministerial Conference, several World Trade Organization members would launch a joint ministerial declaration on trade and women's economic empowerment to provide a framework and platform to make trade more inclusive for all. They lauded the work of the International Gender Champions – Geneva, in particular the initiative's Trade Impact Group which prepared the declaration. The declaration would not become a barrier to trade, as it was non-binding, and served to focus attention on the linkage between trade and gender in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The declaration would include elements such as collaboration and sharing of best practices on policies, analysis and data collection to ensure women's participation in trade, and a progress report in 2019. Currently, one third of World Trade Organization members supported the declaration, and panellists expressed hope that more countries would join. Some panellists noted the role of UNCTAD on trade and gender, including its toolbox, courses and analytical studies.

32. On non-tariff measures, panellists highlighted the importance and challenges of and policy initiatives on non-tariff measures. Non-tariff measures tended to matter more than tariffs. Their impact was greater for exports from least developed countries and landlocked developing countries and for small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries. Market access alone was however not enough: Aid for Trade and other preferential measures were essential for more vulnerable countries. To ensure that trade policy promoted sustainable development, rules and disciplines should support the ability of member States to benefit from trade while allowing appropriate flexibilities.

33. One panellist presented specific transparency initiatives, such as the European Union Trade Helpdesk and a joint transparency initiative facilitating small and medium-sized enterprise trade in goods by 35 member States. He emphasized that the debate on transparency disciplines and good regulatory practices should be brought to the World Trade Organization, while recognizing the need to address capacity limits, as for example in the Agreement on Trade Facilitation.

34. Another panellist highlighted that, though non-tariff measures primarily pursued legitimate public policy objectives, they also substantially affected trade through information, compliance and procedural costs, and highlighted the importance of non-tariff measures for investment. The UNCTAD non-tariff measure database, regional analyses and analytical methodologies were instrumental to reducing transparency gaps. She encouraged member States to facilitate transparency efforts on non-tariff measures, recognize the practical obstacles for market access, reduce procedural obstacles and promote mutually beneficial exchange with the private sector.

Showcasing UNCTAD cooperation and activities furthering achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

35. One panellist noted that, while progress in negotiations for the Eleventh Ministerial Conference was slow and outcomes uncertain, it was important to consider what trade could do for the African continent. The negotiating positions of the African Group at the World Trade Organization were guided by the continent's general development objectives and principles embodied in the Agenda 2063, which sought to leverage the multilateral trading system, regional integration and structural transformation for sustainable development and growth. Given the slow pace of World Trade Organization negotiations, regional negotiations had become the focus of many countries, including in Africa. Led by the African Union, Africa had embarked on a programme of political and economic integration, using trade as an engine for growth. The Lagos Plan of Action (1980), the Abuja Treaty (1991) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (2001) were core documents that provided a vision of integration and aimed the establishment of a single market in six stages, to be implemented over three decades. Several regional economic communities were leading the way on the Continental Free Trade Agreement process based on positive results they had achieved to date at the subregional level. Despite some remaining concerns (e.g. insufficient productive capacities, low access to energy and revenue loss due to tariff liberalization), many positive elements could be further strengthened, such as the dynamism of trade at the borders between African countries. The first phase of Continental Free Trade Agreement negotiations should be finalized in a few weeks, though it was likely that completion of all negotiating elements would require time. Some outcome would be possible, ultimately allowing for increased intraregional trade, industrialization and structural transformation, economic growth (including in least developed countries) and poverty reduction.

36. Another panellist highlighted that competition policy and law had many economic benefits, essential for driving countries' socioeconomic development goals. Economic competition could lead to increased productivity, efficiency, innovation, employment, lower prices and a greater variety of quality goods and services. Sustainable Development Goals 3 through 7, on health, education, gender equality and women's empowerment, water and sanitation and modern energy, respectively, were linked to competition policy. The objectives could be reached partly through competition policy which should foster more equitable growth. The trend towards economic liberalization, privatization and

deregulation were increasing market competition. However anti-competitive practices could hinder economic benefits if competition was left in the hands of the market.

37. In Botswana, emerging private sector and anti-competitive practices undermined the Government's economic reforms objectives until Botswana introduced competition policy and law, to avoid erosion of competition benefits from anti-competitive practices. This drew more attention to market structure imperfections such as monopolies and their adverse impact on inclusive and sustainable development. Lack of proper skills and inadequate human resources crippled effective implementation of competition policy in many developing countries. He urged UNCTAD to continue undertaking peer reviews to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks of developing countries.

38. Another panellist described how trade could be harnessed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In Senegal, the Emergent Senegal Plan had been designed to achieve a large majority of the Goals' targets through structural transformation, promotion of human capital and good governance. Recognizing trade as a catalyst for advancing the Goals, Senegal, as other least developed countries, urgently awaited implementation of decisions adopted under the World Trade Organization on duty-free and quota-free market access, the services waiver and preferential rules of origins for least developed countries. With consensus lacking in many current negotiating issues, it was crucial to keep development at the heart of World Trade Organization negotiations.

39. Many delegations thanked UNCTAD for technical assistance provided through services policy reviews, trade policy frameworks and national green export reviews aimed at building productive and export capacity in a country's green and services sectors. UNCTAD work benefited developing countries and particularly least developed countries in augmenting technical capacity.

40. One delegation underlined the significant contribution of UNCTAD on Continental Free Trade Agreement negotiations and assistance in boosting intra-African trade. Another delegation requested UNCTAD to conduct an independent analysis of international trade trends and ways to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through trade.

41. One panellist emphasized that, given UNCTAD expertise on least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and its technical cooperation programmes in those countries, it would be more appropriate if least developed countries were served from Geneva.

Trade logistics and sustainable development: Trade facilitation

42. The UNCTAD secretariat introduced the positive impact of trade logistics reforms on the Sustainable Development Goals. Efficient trade facilitation and transport was increasingly important to trade-driven development. The reforms had a direct bearing on employment, transparency, investment and human and institutional capacities. There was a need to mitigate and adapt to negative externalities such as safety and pollution.

43. One panellist presented the concept of a port community system, which was an electronic platform enabling exchange of information between stakeholders in ports. The main objective of such systems was to facilitate operations and simplify trade procedures. Portnet Morocco was a best practice example. Change management was also a critical factor for successful implementation of trade reforms.

44. Another panellist focused on the role of legal instruments in transport and trade facilitation such as the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets, noting that many international legal instruments were already in existence to facilitate trade. He encouraged developing and least developed countries to adopt relevant instruments and best practices. He noted that trade facilitation worked at the national, regional and international levels, and use of international standards and legal instruments was important at all levels.

45. Several delegates stressed the importance of collaborating with the private sector in the implementation of trade facilitation reforms. Other delegates noted a lack of awareness among many developing and least developed countries of existing international standards and international legal instruments in the area of trade and transport facilitation and

proposed that UNCTAD could promote use of such instruments through capacity-building programmes. The secretariat provided information on UNCTAD technical assistance activities.

46. One panellist presented an example of a trade portal developed by Kenya in collaboration with the UNCTAD eRegulations team to comply with article 1 of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization. The portal's objective was to provide stakeholders with access to relevant information on trade procedures. UNCTAD had been instrumental in assisting Kenya to implement this system. Some delegations noted the implementation of the trade portal as a best practice example of moving from theory to action.

47. In her concluding remarks, the Chair of the session noted that the session discussed the contribution of transport and trade facilitation in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that the session provided insight on the opportunities and challenges that countries were facing in implementing trade facilitation. She also stressed the importance of public-private partnerships and involvement of the public and private sectors from an initial stage.

Trade logistics and sustainable development: Transport

48. One panellist illustrated the added value of the expanded Panama Canal for transport connectivity and improved performance, considering the increased size of vessels in the global fleet. The new locks, opened in 2016, witnessed an increase in demand higher than expected, primarily driven by two sectors: container ships and liquid petroleum gas carriers. To reduce emissions from the canal transits, the Panama Canal Authority had introduced the Green Connection Environmental Recognition Programme, which recognized customers who demonstrated excellent environmental stewardship and encouraged others to implement technologies and standards to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The programme encompassed Environmental Premium Ranking, which allowed qualified customers the opportunity to improve their position within the Panama Canal's customer ranking system when booking transit through the Panama Canal. As a result, there had been a reduction of more than 17 million tons of carbon dioxide during the previous year.

49. Another panellist highlighted the importance of promoting modern transport systems as one priority of Turkmenistan to enhance socioeconomic development and support regional and international cooperation. He noted the importance of the first Global Sustainable Transport Conference held in Ashgabat in November 2016 as an effective step for further development of partnerships. Modern transport and multimodal and transit infrastructure along strategic transit corridors in the region would cover continental Eurasia with entry to marine terminals of the Black Sea and Baltic regions, South and South-East Asia, and Middle East and Asia-Pacific regions. He cited national and international transport infrastructure projects, including a new Central Asia-Middle East transport corridor and several railway routes which represented cost-effective and efficient transport systems in the region. He underscored the importance of United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/107 on transport, reiterating the importance of ensuring the integration of economic, social and environment sustainability dimensions in transport.

50. Another panellist stated that the main aim of the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency, covering Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, was to facilitate trade and promote economic integration in the region. With current transportation costs amounting up to 40 per cent of value of goods, improvement in the corridor's transport infrastructure and services, including through investments, was key. The move towards more sustainable freight transport systems and linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals was essential. Going forward, he suggested a defined sustainable freight strategy, in collaboration with UNCTAD, which would engage decision-makers, thus building capacity and contextualizing. Having a clear and integrated sustainable transport programme would help to mobilize funding for corridor development.

51. The final panellist focused on specifics that make transportation infrastructure extremely critical for Caribbean small island developing States, in particular ports and coastal airports, which were lifelines for external trade, food, energy and tourism. However, they were often particularly exposed and vulnerable to the impacts of climatic factors and extreme events. Among other challenges faced were limited transport modes and interconnectivity, inflexible scheduling, usually having a single airport or seaport that supports both goods and passenger movement, and high transportation fixed costs per capita. For instance, recent hurricanes (Irma and Maria) caused loss of life, disruption of trade flows and considerable damage to critical infrastructure. Adaptation efforts include an UNCTAD technical assistance project. Using a case-study approach, the project aimed to develop a transferable methodology for assessing climate-related risk and vulnerability with a view to identifying effective adaptation options.

52. One delegate underlined the importance of UNCTAD technical cooperation programmes on sustainable and resilient freight transportation systems, and suggested further cooperation and funding of the programmes.

53. Several panellists and delegates agreed on the importance of transport infrastructure for reducing transport costs and enhancing economic and social development, as well as on the need for increased funding to sustain and develop infrastructure. There were often difficulties associated with obtaining such funding and investments, and the private sector should continue to be closely engaged. Challenges to mobilizing investments in transport infrastructure related, among other issues, to risk allocations and returns, bankability of projects and government policies, particularly as regarded concessions, as well as the need for a customized, case-by-case approach.

54. One delegate proposed that UNCTAD should organize a business forum on investment in transport infrastructure and trade facilitation, as one of the forthcoming multi-year expert meetings would be on sustainable transport. The forum would provide a good opportunity to link the intergovernmental work of experts with ongoing UNCTAD research work on transport finance including guidelines for public-private partnerships in transport infrastructure.

C. Progress report on promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars

(Agenda item 5)

55. The UNCTAD secretariat presented overviews of work conducted under the three pillars of work of research and analysis, consensus-building and technical cooperation.

Presentation of the activity report of the Division on Technology and Logistics

56. The secretariat noted that research and analysis of the Division on Technology and Logistics included the *Review of Maritime Transport*, studies on transport and trade facilitation, a transport and trade facilitation newsletter and the production of online databases on maritime transport, which included maritime country profiles and the yearly Liner Shipping Connectivity Index.

57. Technical assistance work included delivering the Automated System for Customs Data programme, the largest technical assistance programme of UNCTAD accounting for over 50 per cent of UNCTAD technical cooperation. With 71 operational projects currently under way, the programme's impact included accelerating clearance of goods at customs, increasing the volume of electronic document processed and increasing the revenue collected by customs services. The UNCTAD empowerment programme for national trade facilitation committees had benefited over 50 countries to date and helped create national trade facilitation committees and improved their sustainability throughout developing countries. It had facilitated ratification of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation in a number of countries. The division also delivers two programmes to enhance the sustainability and climate resilience of the transport sector. With regard to human resources development, the Division had continued implementing its Train for Trade programme, which covered, among other topics, port management, international trade statistics and e-commerce

legislation. Finally, the Division continued to deliver the “paragraph 166” course, the Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda, at the regional level and through short courses in Geneva.

58. Major accomplishments in 2017 in terms of consensus-building included the first International Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees, contributions to major global conferences on transport and climate and the organization of various expert meetings on transport and trade facilitation.

59. Some delegates, noting their appreciation for activities in support of sustainable development, stressed the importance of the paragraph 166 course and asked that it be strengthened in the future, in particular by introducing an interregional component in addition to regional courses.

Presentation of the activity report of the Special Unit on Commodities

60. The secretariat noted that the activities of the Special Unit on Commodities covered the period from November 2016 to November 2017.

61. One delegate expressed appreciation for UNCTAD technical assistance work, noting that there had been improvements in terms of financial resource mobilization by the Special Unit on Commodities over the last few years to fund projects. Given the specific challenges that commodity-dependent developing countries continued to face, the UNCTAD secretariat called on developed country partners to provide more extrabudgetary resources to scale up the technical cooperation programme.

62. Another delegate confirmed that the Government of Indonesia had approached UNCTAD to work on a study on harnessing palm oil potential for the country’s smallholders. He mentioned the importance of palm oil was important for Indonesia, both in terms of export earnings and smallholders’ incomes. The palm oil sector was therefore central to poverty reduction and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Indonesia faced increased challenges in export markets due to non-tariff barriers, highlighting that work in the area was important for the country.

Presentation of the activity report of the Division on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities

63. The secretariat noted that the work of the Division on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities focused on five clusters.

64. UNCTAD trade analysis work included data gathering and analysis of the development impact of trade regulations, especially non-tariff measures, which had an ever increasing impact on trade. UNCTAD also built developing country capacity to use voluntary sustainability standards as a sustainable development tool and led the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, a joint initiative of UNCTAD, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Trade Centre, United Nations Industrial Development Organization and United Nations Environment Programme.

65. On trade negotiations and commercial diplomacy, UNCTAD monitored developments in the multilateral trading system and built national capacity to develop informed trade policies and negotiating objectives. Activities included technical support to 13 countries currently acceding and 9 countries recently acceded to the World Trade Organization, ongoing African Continental Free Trade Agreement negotiations, as well as Trade Policy Frameworks and Services Policy Reviews, and preparing and conducting the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Services, Trade and Development.

66. UNCTAD organized the Intergovernmental Groups of Experts on Competition Law and Policy and on Consumer Protection Law and Policy. Research and analysis, including its competition and consumer protection policy peer reviews, helped countries to strengthen their national regimes as did technical assistance programmes. Among them were projects for 16 countries in Latin America (Competition and Consumer Protection for Latin America project), Central African Economic and Monetary Community, Ethiopia and countries of the Middle East and South Africa.

67. On trade, environment and sustainable development, intensive work was carried out on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14, including policy analysis of fishery subsidies and a new project on evidence-based and oceans economy and trade strategies that were policy coherent. UNCTAD was also carrying out national green export reviews in nine countries, helping them to develop green sectors and exports.

68. The *Trade and Gender Toolbox* was helping policymakers to analyse likely impact on women if a given trade policy were implemented. Its teaching material on trade and gender, including a manual and online course, was being tailored to specific needs of target regions including the East African Community, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and Southern African Development Community.

III. Organizational matters

A. Opening of the session

69. The ninth session of the Trade and Development Commission was opened at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, on 27 November 2017 by Mr. Aleksandr Tselyuk (Belarus), Vice-Chair of the Commission at its eighth session.

B. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

70. At its opening plenary meeting on 27 November 2017, the Commission elected the following officers to serve on its Bureau:

Chair: Ms. Kadra Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti)

Rapporteur: Mr. Syed Atif Raza (Pakistan)

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

71. At its opening plenary meeting, the Commission adopted its provisional agenda as contained in document TD/B/C.I/41. The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Reports of expert meetings
 - (a) Reports of the multi-year and single-year expert meetings:
 - (i) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation
 - (ii) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Commodities and Development
 - (iii) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development
 - (iv) Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the Promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation
 - (v) Expert Meeting on the Ways and Means of Improving the Implementation of Priority Areas Agreed in the Istanbul Programme of Action
 - (b) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy

- (c) Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy
- 4. From decisions to actions: Trade as a catalyst for accomplishing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- 5. Progress report on promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars
- 6. Other business
- 7. Adoption of the report of the Commission to the Trade and Development Board

D. Adoption of the report of the Commission to the Trade and Development Board

(Agenda item 7)

72. At its closing plenary meeting, on 1 December 2017, the Trade and Development Commission authorized the Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chair, to finalize the report after the conclusion of the meeting. The report would be submitted to the Trade and Development Board.

Annex

Attendance*

1. Representatives from the following States members of UNCTAD and members of the Commission attended the session:

Algeria	Kuwait
Argentina	Lesotho
Bahamas	Morocco
Belgium	Nigeria
Brazil	Oman
China	Philippines
Côte d'Ivoire	Poland
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Russian Federation
Djibouti	Saudi Arabia
Egypt	Sierra Leone
El Salvador	Spain
Ethiopia	Sudan
Germany	Togo
Guatemala	Trinidad and Tobago
Haiti	Turkey
Indonesia	Turkmenistan
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Uganda
Jamaica	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Jordan	United States of America
Kenya	Yemen

2. The following non-member observer State of the Conference was represented at the session:

State of Palestine

3. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
Organization of Islamic Cooperation
South Centre

4. The following United Nations organs, bodies and programmes were represented at the session:

Economic Commission for Europe
International Trade Centre

5. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the session:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

6. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

General category:

Engineers of the World
International Network for Standardization of Higher Education Degrees

Special category:

International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations

* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/C.I/INF.9.